(c) the reasons for non-compliance of prescribed rules and rentals issued through the communiques by G.M., Telephones, Noida; and

(d) the reasons for charging different rentals in different exchanges falling under the same SDCA?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI ASHOK PRADHAN): (a) Rental @ Rs., 220 per month is not being recovered. Actually, the rate of rental is Rs. 210 per month for those villages of the District Gautam Budh Nagar, which fall within the Local Area of Noida Telephone System (NTS), and Rs. 110 per month for those outside the said Local Area. However, from 1.5.2003, an Economy Plan has also been introduced, for the subscribers in the villages falling with the NTS, under which a lower rental of Rs. 150 per month is payable.

(b) and (c) Rentals were revised, as per extant norms and rules, owing to increased exchange capacity and also when certain areas were reclassified as urban or rural according to the latest Census Report of 2001.

(d) Different rentals are being charged, even within the same SDCA, depending upon the exchange capacity, classification of an area as rural or urban, and the capacity of the Exchange System.

Telephones by private telecom operators

1717. SHRI KALRAJ MISHRA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether private telecom operators do not generally come forward to lay telephone lines and provide mobile or land-line telephone facilities in rural areas in remote and backward districts and are subjected to penalties for avoiding villages;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) whether Government have issued directions to private telecom operators to cover the villages which are, so far, devoid of telephone facilities; if so, the number of such villages as on September 1, 2003 and the details of the orders issued?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI ASHOK PRADHAN): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) Licences granted for operation of Basic Service in 1997-98 to six private companies stipulated provision of Village Public Telephones (VPTs) in 97,806 villages as a part of roll out obligation. All of them were not able to fulfill their obligations in the stipulated time frame. The details as on 01.09.2003 are given in the Statement (*See* below). The licence also stipulated that in case a VPT is provided by Department of Telecommunication (Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd. as successor organization), the said roll out shall be treated as fulfilled. Accordingly, in the absence of commencement of service by the private Basic Service Operators or non availability of the network of private Basic Service Operator in that area, the Department of Telecommunications had provided VPTs. As these operators could not fulfill the roll out obligations for providing village Public Telephones (VPTs), Liquidated Damages of Rs. 53.75 crores were recovered from these Private Service Operators for not fulfilling the roll out obligations and for not commissioning the service in time. The Basic Service Operators who were granted licences in 2001-2002 were to set up Points of Presence in Urban, Semi-urban and Rural Short Distance Charging Areas (SDCA) in equal proportion in each of the four phases. Encashment of Performance Bank guarantee was stipulated for non fulfillment of roll out obligations at the end of 2nd, 3rd and 4th phase after three, five and seven years of signing of the licence agreement. The period of the same is not over. Further these Private Basic Service Operators have now migrated to Unified Access Service License Regime except in four service areas wherein roll out obligations were stipulated in terms of District Headquarter and the coverage of 50% of District Headquarter in three years or any town in lieu thereof.

Statement

VPT status of private basic service operators

VPTs	Bharti Telenet Ltd. M.P.	Tata Teleservices A.P.	Tata Teleservices (Maharashtra) Ltd.	Reliance Telecom Gujarat	Shayam Telelink Rajasthan	HFCL Infotel. Punjab	Total
No. of uncovered villages As on 15.8.2000	19168	6096	11091	6911 (4202)#	17338	Nil	60604
No. of VPTs Committed in first 3 years from effective date*	16500	9635	25760	8635	31834	5442***	97806
No. of VPTs provided as on 01.09.2003**	607	1347	2399	4114	2796	869	12132

*These commitments were to be met by 30-9-1998 in case of AP, Gujarat, Punjab and by 30.9.99 in case of Maharashtra. For MP and Rajasthan the same were to be completed by 30.9.2000 and 4.3.2001 respectively.

** Figures are as reported by the licensees.

*** As all villages have been covered in Punjab by BSNL. The faulty MARRs are replaced by the privated licensees.

In Gujarat 4202 are the villages which do not have a telecom facility. 2709 villages have phones but not a public phone.